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Progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General*

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* The report reviews the status of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It is the result of consultation and information exchange between United Nations agencies and interested regional organizations. It had benefited from the outcomes of four regional meetings: the Ministerial Meeting of the Caribbean Small Island Developing States, 10–14 November 1997; the Ministerial Meeting of African Small Island Developing States, 7–10 July 1998; the Roundtable of Pacific Island Ministers on Sustainable Development, 17 November 1998; and the Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean Small Island Developing States, 24–27 November 1998.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, at its nineteenth special session, in 1997, decided to convene a two-day special session immediately preceding the Assembly's fifty-fourth session, in 1999, for a full and comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, (resolution S-19/2, annex). The Assembly also decided to request the Commission on Sustainable Development to carry out, at its seventh session, a full review of the Programme of Action[1] in preparation for the special session. Subsequently, at its fifty-third session, it reaffirmed the importance of the special session and its preparatory process. The present report has been prepared to facilitate the review by the Commission.

2. Section II of the present report provides an overall assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action and outlines recent trends in external resource flows in support of the efforts of small island developing States at implementing it. Section III gives an account of the constraints encountered in the implementation process. Section IV highlights some emerging problems and issues of particular concern to small island developing States, sets out priority issues for future action as identified by small island developing States through regional and subregional expert and ministerial meetings, and provides some recommendations for the Commission's programme of work for the next five years.

3. The report is complemented by 16 addenda, each focusing on one major theme of the Programme of Action. The addenda are updates of reports previously submitted to the Commission. For a comprehensive view of progress made at the sectoral and cross-sectoral levels and of the variety of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues, sector-specific constraints and action needed, the report should be read in conjunction with the addenda.

II. Overview of progress achieved and external assistance trends

A. Progress achieved

4. While much remains to be done to attain the objectives of the Programme of Action, during the five years since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, a great deal of effort has been made by small island developing States at the national and regional levels with international support in all small island developing States regions resulting in perceptible progress in implementation. Much of the effort thus far has centred on understanding the crucial role of sound environmental management for the sustainability of socio-economic development; on coming to grips with the multitude of environmental issues calling for attention; on raising public awareness of the importance of protecting environmental assets; and on the exploration of strategies, policies and measures for integrating environmental dimensions into socio-economic planning and development practices. To those ends, numerous seminars, workshops, expert meetings, conferences and regional and subregional ministerial meetings have been held. Some of these meetings have deliberated on general sustainable development concepts and issues; others have explored sectoral and subsectoral issues. These activities have spawned a vast literature and have contributed immensely to an enhanced understanding of sustainable development issues and to greater environmental consciousness across the small island developing States regions. They have also contributed, if thus far to a lesser degree, to the recognition of the need for partnership between government and

civil society in setting standards, preparing development action plans and formulating policies.

5. While the deliberative process is still ongoing, the greater understanding of the implications of environmental protection for the sustainability of socio-economic development and for the improvement of the quality of life has induced concrete actions in small island developing States to begin the implementation of the Programme of Action. Although commitments of resources and political efforts to implement the Programme have varied from State to State, by and large they have made perceptible gains at the national and regional levels.

6. At the national level, small island developing States generally have taken steps to (a) formulate national environmental strategies, sector strategies, and action plans; (b) carry out legislative reforms to meet desired environmental norms; (c) reform policies and establish or revise regulatory regimes to induce behavioural changes; (d) establish national planning and policy-making institutions — ministries, development councils, environmental units and so on — with responsibilities for environmental management.

7. The national institutional, planning and policy reforms that were carried out after considerable deliberation have begun to produce some concrete results for the environment. These results, however, cannot be documented comprehensively and meaningfully at the present time for a variety of reasons, the most important of which are the following: implementation has barely begun and the impacts on environmental indicators are not as yet clearly discernible; data on sectoral and subsectoral action and the consequent impact is as yet fragmentary; implementation has been spread over a number of sectors in accordance with national priorities and resource availability; baseline data for small island developing States on major environmental indicators is not available yet, which makes assessment of progress or lack thereof difficult. The indirect evidence, which is itself sketchy, is that small island developing States, each one at its own pace, are increasingly using a variety of economic instruments and environmental tools such as the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and geographic information systems (GIS), strengthening regulations, reforming relevant policies, and implementing priority projects at the sectoral and subsectoral levels to prevent adverse impacts on the environment. Annex I, section A, provides some illustrative examples of initiatives of small island developing States at the national level.

8. At the regional level, efforts have been made in all small island developing States regions to strengthen regional institutions or to create new ones in order to enhance regional cooperation in, and coordination of, the implementation of the Programme of Action. A number of regional organizations have taken internal measures to restructure their operations in order to increase their effectiveness and efficiency. Regional and subregional organizations have become actively involved in furthering the implementation of the Programme through a variety of activities, including research, provision of policy and other technical advice to member States and coordination of implementation at the regional level. In the Pacific, where a number of organizations, each with a particular focus, are involved in the implementation of the Programme, a coordination mechanism, namely, the South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee has been established in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to harmonize the activities of the various regional organizations. In the Pacific, regional cooperation efforts of small island developing States regional institutions have been greatly assisted by the active role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and its Pacific Operations Centre. Likewise, in the Caribbean, a number of regional and subregional organizations are actively pursuing the goals of the Programme of Action. Since the Barbados Conference, the secretariats of

the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have been jointly serving as the regional coordination mechanism *ad interim* for the implementation of the Programme, and have consistently stressed the need for a permanent regional coordination mechanism in order to ensure its operational effectiveness. As far as the small island developing States of the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean are concerned, the initiative to promote cooperation among them was launched only recently, in the second half of 1998. Thus far only a subregional organization, the Indian Ocean Commission whose membership includes three small island developing States located in the western Indian Ocean, has played an active role in the implementation of the Programme. In their recent initiative, however, the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean small island developing States have proposed to create an institution — an Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean small island developing States centre — with international support to promote cooperation among them and to coordinate the implementation of the Programme. While the regional institutions of small island developing States are playing an active role in furthering the achievement of the goals of the Programme of Action, they operate under severe human-resource and financial constraints and are unable to carry out their mandates effectively. Annex I, section B, provides some illustrative examples of initiatives taken by small island developing States at the regional level.

9. At the international level, small island developing States have made strenuous efforts to persuade the international community to take earnest and effective measures to arrest global warming and the consequent rise in sea level, and changes in climatic and weather patterns. By and large they have also made efforts, sometimes with international assistance, to ratify major multilateral agreements and international legal instruments, and commitments to comply with their provisions with the necessary international support. Those that have not done so yet need to take action without further delay to ratify all international cooperative arrangements. Annex I, section C, provides a snapshot view of their efforts at cooperation for sustainable development at the international level.

B. External assistance trends

10. The implementation of the Programme of Action is explicitly predicated on a tripartite partnership at the national, regional and international levels. The present section presents a brief account of the role played by the international community since the Barbados Conference in supporting the implementation of the Programme at the national and regional levels. A more detailed account, based on data obtained from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, of financial and technical support provided by the international community is contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.17/1999/7), which is before the Commission at its present session. A comprehensive account of sector-specific projects undertaken by the international community in support of the Programme of Action can be found in the addenda to the present report and in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session (A/53/358).

11. Total bilateral commitments in 1996, the latest year for which complete data are available, increased as compared with 1992; and was above the average for the period 1992–1995. However, the 1996 level did not represent the highest recorded for this period. Total multilateral commitments in 1996 were also above the 1992 level, but below the average for the period 1992–1995. In terms of coverage of programme areas at the global level by both bilateral and multilateral commitments, those that received large shares were

human resources development, transport and communications, freshwater resources, land resources, coastal and marine resources and energy resources.

12. Insofar as net bilateral disbursements of resources (grants and net concessional loans) are concerned, the 1996 volume fell below the levels of the preceding two years, largely owing to the fall in official development assistance (ODA) flows to one country, but it was higher than the 1993 level. A more definitive assessment of the trend in bilateral efforts in support of the implementation of the Programme of Action must await the availability of complete data for 1997 and 1998. Multilateral disbursements in 1996 were down from 1995, but remained above the average for the period 1993–1995.

13. The data available indicate that nominal overall resource flows, bilateral and multilateral combined, peaked in 1994 and declined thereafter in terms of both commitments and disbursements. In 1994, overall commitments reached US$ 1,419 million and overall disbursements US$ 2,335 million; in 1996 they stood at US$ 1,178 million and US$ 2,158 million, respectively. In line with past trends, multilateral disbursements of ODA resources were more evenly distributed among small island developing States; bilateral ODA, on the other hand, continued by and large to be driven by historical and geographical ties.

14. Taking into account the fact that data on some cross-sectoral areas such as national institutions and administrative capacity, regional institutions and technical cooperation, and some data on science and technology are subsumed under sectoral areas in the revised DAC purpose classification codes on which the analysis of the data is based, one can conclude that a number of important programme areas have not yet received adequate attention from the international community. The major ones include climate change and sea level rise, biodiversity resources, management of wastes and natural and environmental disasters. It is imperative that programme areas that have so far received larger shares of external resources continue to be accorded adequate attention and those areas that have so far received little external support be given greater attention. A mere shift in sectoral allocation of ODA resources will not have the a significant impact in advancing the implementation of the Programme of Action. Effective and timely implementation will call for an intensification of efforts at providing external development assistance to small island developing States through new and additional commitments and disbursements of resources. This will be of the utmost importance in the years to come in sustaining the momentum generated in small island developing States at the national and regional levels, particularly in view of the tightening financial situation in several of them.

III. Problems and constraints encountered in the process of implementation

15. Small island developing States have made a good beginning in the process of building institutional capacity for sustainable development, in formulating strategies and action plans, and in carrying out policy reforms, but they have encountered a number of problems and constraints which have slowed down or impeded the process of implementation. During the period under review, a number of small island developing States in all regions have been affected by adverse economic developments which have impaired their financial capacity to implement even priority sustainable development measures. This is particularly true for the Pacific small island developing States, where a combination of internal and external factors have impinged adversely on their economic performance. The need for carrying out adjustment measures in some small island developing States, such as Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, to correct economic imbalances rooted

in the past, combined with the recent economic and financial crisis in Asia, have had both direct and indirect economic impacts affecting domestic output, prices of export commodities and export earnings, incomes from tourism and foreign investments. Pacific small island developing States generally are feeling the indirect impacts of the Asian crisis through decelerating growth in the economies of Australia and New Zealand to which their economies are closely interlinked. The Asian crisis has actually had an adverse impact on the economies of small island developing States generally. In addition, drought conditions have appeared in several Pacific small island developing States and in several instances have not been sufficiently relieved by annual wet seasons with the result that annual droughts have become progressively more severe. The adverse impacts are reflected in declines in agricultural production and exacerbation of water shortages. The most tragic disaster affecting small island developing States was a tsunami in 1998 on the north coast of Papua New Guinea. In the Caribbean, a number of small island developing States and areas, including Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and the United States Virgin Islands, have suffered severe damage from hurricanes.

16. Although not necessarily to the same degree, all small island developing States experience constraints in the following areas: finance, skilled human resources for the implementation of sustainable development measures, and sustainable development institutions and administrative capacity. A common hurdle faced by small island developing States in all regions is the insufficiency of financial resources relative to the enormity of the tasks to be accomplished. As mentioned above, for a number of them, the availability of domestic financial resources has actually been diminished by adverse economic developments and natural disasters. Many critically needed infrastructural projects that require large investments such as in air and maritime transport, adaptation to sea level rise, recycling and sound disposal of wastes, tourism infrastructure, road and telecommunication infrastructure lie beyond the resources of most small island developing States. For instance, the Caribbean small island developing States have pointed out that financial constraints present insurmountable handicaps to essential effort at the establishment and strengthening of infrastructure, institutions and capacity-building. Such handicaps are at least as severe in most small island developing States in the other regions. While most small island developing States have actively participated in international and regional deliberations on sustainable development, committed themselves to international and regional legal instruments and undertaken regional initiatives and arrangements, the lack of resources has seriously undermined their ability to live up to their commitments. Participation in international and regional arrangements allows them to pursue mutually complementary objectives in a holistic manner and to benefit from the synergy generated, but it also burdens them with a multitude of obligations which further stretch their limited resources, both human and financial. Many small island developing States simply do not have the financial means to meet their international obligations without adequate financial and technical support from the international community.

17. Dealing effectively with environmental problems calls for adequate human resources, not only in size but also, and more important, in the range of skills required and the level of technical sophistication. Clearly most small island developing States are constrained by small population size and therefore a small labour force. In spite of efforts, in many instances with external assistance, opportunities for higher education for sustainable development including for training in requisite specialized skills are sorely inadequate in most small island developing States although the foundation for developing such skills, in terms of basic education, exists in most of them. Sustainable development calls for training in a large number of technical skills and cannot be effectively pursued with a labour force that is merely literate at a basic level. For instance, problems of water supply in terms of both

quantity and quality, environmentally sound management of solid and liquid wastes, adaptation to climate change and sea level rise, integrated management of coastal zones, prevention or minimization of natural and environmental disasters among others, all call for specific skills, without which small island developing States — even with the highest level of political will — cannot hope to solve them. In recognition of the difficulty of building adequate levels of skills at the national level, small island developing States, particularly in the Pacific and the Caribbean, have established regional institutions by pooling their resources or fashioned new forms of collaboration among existing ones. These institutions are engaged at present in providing useful services in research, and policy advice and intra-regional coordination within the scope of resources that have been made available to them by member States and the international community, but they have yet to be mandated and provided with human and financial resources to launch programmes for training in the requisite technical skills. As a matter of fact, they need to enhance their own technical capabilities to fully meet the demands of their current mandates.

18. In addition to finance and human resources, small island developing States are constrained by the inadequacy of institutional infrastructure and administrative capacity, which is in effect a reflection of constraints posed by both financial and human resources. Effective implementation of the Programme of Action calls for adequate institutions and administrative capacity to design, implement and oversee the implementation of national strategies and policies and action plans, and to enforce environmental legislation and regulations. Many small island developing States are too small and simply do not have the manpower needed to develop a critical mass of technically qualified staff to man even the most critically needed institutions. Due to size in some, and generally due to the imperatives of sound taxation and budgetary policies, it is difficult to establish and fund the government structures and associated institutions essential for effective resource management. At the national level, efforts have been made to set up institutions such as ministries, development councils and environment units, but these are as yet rudimentary and need time to build up specialized staff proportionate to their tasks. They also need adequate budgets to function effectively, which at present is not the case. An example of a major programme area that is seriously affected by inadequate institutional capacity is coastal and marine resources. Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM) has not yet been successfully implemented because the system requires a minimum number of qualified individuals and appropriate institutions, although several countries have expressed the desirability of establishing specialized units for this purpose.

19. Small island developing States in all regions are hampered by the lack of proper institutional and administrative capacity not only to meet the demands of natural resource management but also to handle specialized demands emanating from obligations of international conventions and agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the International Coral Reef Initiative, and to handle negotiations of international treaties and agreements effectively.

20. In some small island developing States, sectoral management institutions for particular sectors, such as waste management, have been established. That is a step in the right direction, but such institutions need to be nurtured and provided with adequate resources

to achieve their goals. Institutions for training in appropriate specialized skills, which are absolutely necessary to staff national institutions for sustainable development, have yet to be established in most small island developing States, although some of them have begun to include in their tertiary-level curriculum some courses on natural resource management. In the very small island developing States, it may not be realistic to aim for the establishment of several specialized sectoral resource management and training institutions. These countries would probably need to develop effective multisectoral institutions staffed by experts trained overseas.

IV. Looking to the future

A. Major emerging sustainable development concerns and problems

21. In the Pacific, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, there is growing concern about the continued deterioration of the marine environment. Small island developing States in those regions face a range of problems that have increased in severity. The major ones include marine spills — oils, chemicals and other hazardous materials; shipborne wastes — oil, sewage and garbage; sand extraction, seabed mining, transport of nuclear materials and watershed destabilization. They are concerned about the effects of these problems on marine biodiversity, human health and general ecological and economic implications in addition to the costs of expensive clean-ups and remediation requirements when accidents occur.

22. In all small island developing States regions the problem of freshwater availability is worsening, characterized by constant shortages and/or deteriorating quality with adverse consequences for agricultural production and human health. The problem is exacerbated by the growing demand for water of the expanding tourism industry. Intensive groundwater extraction is lowering groundwater tables to levels that allow saline intrusion. Increased quantities of untreated or partially treated domestic wastes and industrial effluents are posing a threat not only to groundwater aquifers but also to coastal zones. In addition to freshwater, in a number of small island developing States land degradation is increasing owing to intensified competition for land use. The problem is particularly acute in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean small island developing States. In these regions, intensification of land use and land-based nearshore marine pollution are increasingly endangering biodiversity resources, and arrangements for reintroducing biogenetic resources following disasters are generally lacking.

23. In a number of small island developing States in various regions, the tightening financial situation is leading to a de-emphasis of sustainable development programmes and a renewed emphasis on improving short-term economic performance. Another important emerging problem in small island developing States generally, unrelated to finance, concerns the lack of systematic coordination in the field, which is giving rise to difficulties in managing the implementation of projects where collaboration among a number of United Nations and other organizations is involved.

24. Small island developing States generally are experiencing an intensification of natural disasters — storm surges, landslides, extensive floods, and recurrent droughts attributable to the El Niño phenomenon. In the Pacific, a number of small island developing States whose agriculture has been affected by extended drought caused by El Niño are envisaging the possibility of large-scale rural-urban migration in the foreseeable future unless their agricultural performance is quickly restored to pre-El Niño levels.

B. Other major issues of particular concern to small island developing States

25. Small island developing States in all regions are concerned about a number of specific issues in addition to those discussed above. The major ones include (a) their economic and ecological fragility and vulnerability to exogenous shocks; (b) globalization of production, distribution and finance and the need to adjust to the new emerging structures; (c) trade liberalization and the need to restructure the export sector; (d) transfer of environmentally sound technologies; (e) adaptation to climate change and sea level rise; (f) the operationalization of the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET); and (g) the operationalization of the Small Island Developing States Technical Cooperation Programme (SIDSTAP).

26. In response to the call of the Programme of Action, the General Assembly and the Commission on Sustainable Development, work has been initiated by the Secretariat on the identification and quantification of the factors underlying the vulnerability of small island developing States to external economic shocks and natural and environmental disasters (see the report of the Secretary-General on the development of a vulnerability index for small island developing States (A/53/65–E/1998/5)). A considerable amount of work on the subject matter has also been done by the Commonwealth Secretariat over an extended period of time, most recently in collaboration with the World Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Thus far, owing to various conceptual, methodological and data-related problems, no single satisfactory quantitative measure of vulnerability or vulnerability index has emerged. In the United Nations system, the Committee for Development Policy is currently engaged in the development of a vulnerability index that could be used as one of the criteria for the identification of the least developed among the developing countries. For small island developing States, the importance of a quantitative measure that will bring out their vulnerability is twofold: to serve as an aid in planning to minimize their vulnerability and as a criterion for access to external concessional sources of assistance.

27. Globalization of production, distribution and finance has expanded considerably since the Barbados Conference. While it has offered new opportunities to countries that have the necessary capacity and flexibility in terms of human resources, technology and natural resource endowments, it has bypassed a number of small island developing States, particularly the smaller and the more remote and dispersed ones. The inherent handicaps of small island developing States, such as small population, lack of technological sophistication and narrow resource base, pose significant obstacles for competing for the foreign direct investment necessary to avail themselves of opportunities offered by the globalization process. Globalization is based on opportunities for cost reduction and economies of scale, which small island developing States cannot offer. In some small island developing States, poor infrastructure, the brain drain and the absence of legislative frameworks conducive to foreign direct investment add to the handicaps. While in the long run small island developing States will benefit from a stronger and more integrated global economy, in the short and medium term they need support to enhance the viability of their export sector through appropriate restructuring and diversification.

28. The Programme of Action stresses the importance for small island developing States to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development through enhanced capacities to exploit new trading opportunities in the context of trade liberalization. This implies efforts towards greater competitiveness of current export products and, as necessary, diversification into new areas of tradeable goods and services, particularly those that are less vulnerable to external shocks. For many small island developing States it also implies

the need for change in the direction of trade to reduce the economic disadvantages of remoteness. In the short and medium terms, however, for many small island developing States trade liberalization will result in the erosion of vital market access preferences for such agricultural products as bananas and sugar and for textiles sold to the European Union. During this transition period small island developing States need support to carry out the necessary diversification into alternative goods and services exports.

29. A critical requirement for the effective implementation of several areas of the Programme of Action is environmentally sound technologies. No meaningful progress can be made in areas such as waste management, natural disaster preparedness, sustainable management of marine resources, renewable energy, and telecommunications without the necessary technologies. In these and other areas, there is a need for concerted efforts at the international level to provide small island developing States with access to technology on affordable terms, and to assist them in their efforts at establishing regional centres for capacity-building including training in the assessment of technologies as well as their management, technology negotiations and partnerships leading to technology transfer, and adaptation of available technology to local conditions.

30. A profound concern among small island developing States is about the impact of climate change and sea level rise. To the extent that climate change is the result of anthropogenic activities, small island developing States are committed to doing their best to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, although their contribution to the problem is negligible. Their main problem is how to adapt to the impacts of climate change and climate variability on climatic and weather patterns and to sea level rise. As witnessed in recent years by a number of small island developing States, particularly in the Pacific, climate change and climate variability can have devastating effects on their economies. Since high proportions of island settlements are located on the coast, as are also major industries, including tourism, encroachment of the sea on land due to sea level rise will have devastating consequences for many small island developing States. To ensure the sustainable development of small island developing States and even the survival of some, concerted action at the international level to reverse the trend of climate change needs to be supplemented by adequate measures to enable those States to successfully adapt to climate change, climate variability and sea level rise.

31. The aim of the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) is to link island stakeholders to the rest of the world including islands globally through the Internet so that they may have easy access to information. Since the Barbados Conference, all small island developing States except Niue and Tuvalu have established connectivity with the Internet. Through UNDP, a SIDSNET Web site at www.sidsnet.org has been created, which enables communication among small island developing States. By June 1999, UNDP plans to complete workshops in 30 island States on training in the use of the SIDSNET Web site to share information with other small island developing States. At present, at the national level, access to the Internet and therefore also to SIDSNET is limited to governmental institutions and the larger private organizations. In most small island developing States, access by stakeholders is constrained by a number of major obstacles, including poor telecommunications infrastructure, high cost of computers, high cost of dial-up and leased lines to the Internet, restrictive telecommunications policies and inadequacy of trained personnel. As long as these obstacles remain, small island developing States will not be able to take full advantage of the many potential benefits of SIDSNET, such as distance learning and information on environmentally sound technologies and practices, tele-health, trade and tourism.

32. The objective of the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDSTAP) is to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge among small island developing States and between those States and other countries for enhancing the quality and broadening the choice of sustainable development expertise of small island developing States. The Programme was launched by UNDP in 1995, following the completion of a feasibility study. The major initiatives under SIDSTAP thus far include studies on the assessments of the needs of African and Caribbean small island developing States and the formulation of a compendium of project proposals for Caribbean small island developing States to address those needs; compilation, publication and circulation of a directory of small island developing States institutions and experts; a training programme in collaboration with the Government of Singapore for the Caribbean small island developing States in selected programme areas; and a training programme in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the enhancement of the human resource capacity of selected regional institutions of small island developing States. In view of its potential for contributing effectively to the development of human resources and institutional capacity for the implementation of the Programme of Action, SIDSTAP deserves continued external support.

C. Sectoral and cross-sectoral priorities

33. In the view of small island developing States, all the thematic programme areas of the Programme of Action are priority areas of equal importance calling for immediate attention. The Barbados Conference identified nine sectoral priority areas, which are contained in chapters I–IX of the Programme of Action, and five cross-sectoral areas, excluding trade and finance which it included under means of implementation. The cross-sectoral areas are seen as indispensable development prerequisites in as much as they deal with the building of human resource, institutional and infrastructural capacity, which is absolutely necessary to carry out sectoral implementation. After considerable deliberations at the national and regional levels, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean small island developing States have recently ranked the programme areas in order of priority at the regional level, while maintaining that they are all priorities in the sense that the objectives of sustainable development cannot be achieved except through a holistic and integrated approach that enables all major linkages to be taken into account, such as Integrated Coastal Area Management (ICAM) or the more comprehensive Island Management System (IMS), which aims not for environmental protection per se but for the integration of all economic, social and environmental dimensions in development planning and practice. The Pacific small island developing States have also drawn up a list of regional priorities but have not ranked the programme areas in any order of priority. The priorities as identified by small island developing States in these regions are contained in annex II to the present report. These priorities, however, do not necessarily correspond fully to the national priorities of individual small island developing States.

34. The adoption of an integrated approach to development so as to give due attention to all the programme areas, however, does not preclude the need to establish priorities within individual programme areas. The programme areas are broad, each calling for a host of actions not all of which, on account of resource constraints, can be taken simultaneously. Thus, there is a compelling necessity on the part of small island developing States to identify the strategic issues to be dealt with in each programme area. Intra-sectoral priorities will evidently differ from country to country depending on each country's specific immediate problems and needs. It is, consequently, not possible to arrive at anything like a list of common priorities of all small island developing States in all programme areas.

35. Looking to the future, it is important to keep in mind that the implementation of major measures takes considerable time and even if resources were available major goals could be attained only over the long term. What is important, therefore, is not to aim for rapid results, but for consistency in implementation so as to maintain the momentum. This will require that the Programme of Action be firmly placed on the political agenda at the national, regional and international levels and be fully recognized by Governments and civil society in all small island developing States and the international community as the framework for sustainable development activities in small island developing States.

D. Suggestions for the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the period 2000–2004

36. The Commission may wish to adopt the work programme set out in the table below for its next review cycle, 2000–2004.

Suggested work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the period 2000–2004

Programme of action themes		
Sectoral themes	*Cross-sectoral themes*	*Economic sectors other than tourism*
	2000	
1. Land resources, including terrestrial biodiversity	1. Regional institutions and technical cooperation	Agriculture and forestry
2. Natural disasters	2. Vulnerability	
	2001	
Climate change and sea level rise	1. Human resources	1. Energy
	2. National institutions and administrative capacity: (a) National institutions (b) Training	2. Industry, including services other than tourism
	2002	
1. Freshwater	Transport and communications: (a) Air transport (b) Maritime transport (c) Telecommunications	Trade and tourism
2. Management of waste		
	2003	
Coastal and marine resources, including marine biodiversity	1. Science and technology: (a) Science (b) Technology transfer	Fisheries: nearshore and offshore
	2. Finance (update of external capital flows to small island developing States annually; analysis of trends in 2003)	
	2004	
Comprehensive review	Comprehensive review	Comprehensive review

Notes

[1] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

Annex I

Selected illustrative examples of significant initiatives by small island developing States at the national, regional and international levels

A. National level

- **Climate change and sea level rise**. Niue has established a number of mechanisms to deal with climate change and sea level rise, which include a Greenhouse Inventory Group, a Vulnerability Impact and Assessment Group, a Capacity-building Group, and a Mitigation and Options Group. Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius and the Federated States of Micronesia are undertaking studies of greenhouse gas sources and sinks.
- **Waste management**. The Bahamas, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Seychelles have developed new regulations to strengthen the regulatory framework for waste management. Barbados has commissioned a technical Working Group on the management of hazardous wastes, and has also developed a programme of action for the disposal of hazardous wastes. Papua New Guinea is developing a pollutant release and transfer register. Mauritius and Seychelles have been developing sanitary landfills.
- **Coastal and marine resources**. Barbados has established a Coastal Conservation Unit and has produced a draft coastal zone management act. Bahrain, Cape Verde, Fiji and Kiribati have developed plans for integrated coastal zone management.
- **Freshwater resources**. Bahrain has established a committee for the protection of freshwater resources. An action plan has been prepared and the water distribution network is being modernized.
- **Land resources**. Fiji has adopted a comprehensive Land Conservation and Improvement Act, which covers good husbandry of land. Good land husbandry practices are also an integral part of its Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act, which governs all leasing of agricultural land.
- **Tourism resources**. Mauritius has reformed legislation and drawn up a master tourism plan to ensure the sustainability of its tourism resources and has established a Ministry of the Environment and Quality of Life. Maldives has enacted an Environmental Protection and Conservation Act, strengthened regulations on tourism development, carried out environmental impact studies and put in place measures for the protection of coral reefs and coastal systems.
- **Biodiversity resources**. Antigua and Barbuda has adopted a legal framework for the protection of endangered species, and has carried out public awareness campaigns. Mauritius has set up a Wildlife and National Parks Advisory Council to oversee the management of national parks; a management plan for ecological restoration of islets is being implemented: *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of endangered endemic plants is being pursued. Small island developing States in all regions have assigned areas for protecting biodiversity. Examples include the Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Project in Dominica and 14 conservation areas in 11 States in the South Pacific, which are either in the design or implementation stages.
- **National institutions and administrative capacity**. Barbados has established a National Commission on Sustainable Development composed of representatives of various ministries and offices, charged with advisory, coordination and advocacy functions. Similar high-level bodies have been established in the Bahamas, Bahrain, Fiji, Haiti, Jamaica, Mauritius, Sao

Tome and Principe and Singapore. Fiji has drafted new legislation to provide a comprehensive legal structure for sustainable development. A sustainable development bill is in the final stage of development. In addition, the country has completed a National Environment Strategy. In the Bahamas, specific legislation has been introduced to cover environmental and natural resources, such as Marine Mammal Legislation, the Agriculture and Fisheries Rule and the Tourism Incentive Act. Initiatives similar to those of Fiji and the Bahamas have been undertaken in Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, Sao Tome and Principe and Singapore among others.

- **Transport and communication**. Airport extension projects have been completed or are under way in a number of small island developing States, including passenger terminal extensions in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Mauritius, the Federated States of Micronesia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Seychelles. New passenger terminals have been built in Palau and Sao Tome and Principe. Cuba has built a new airport.

- **Human resource development**. In the Bahamas, school curricula for the primary and secondary levels have been revised to address environmental and development concerns. Schools and universities are now part of the national network addressing sustainable development issues. In Jamaica, environment and sustainable development issues have been integrated into the curriculum for grades 1–9. At the primary level, grades 1–3 devote 14 per cent of total social studies time to the environment; grades 4–6 use 14 per cent of the social studies time for exploring the environment. At the secondary level, 14 per cent of the science subject time of grades 7–9 is devoted to the environmental studies.

B. Regional level

- **Climate change and sea level rise**. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is developing a programme to enable countries to collect, analyse and interpret meteorological data. As part of the South Pacific Sea-level Rise Monitoring Project, gauges for monitoring sea level have been established in 11 countries in the South Pacific region. In the Caribbean, the tide gauge monitoring network for the Global Oceanic Observation System (GOOS) has been strengthened. In the Caribbean region, 12 countries are participating in the Caribbean Planning for Adaption to Global Climate Change Project, which is the most significant regional initiative in this programme area to date.

- **Waste management**. Pacific small island developing States have adopted the Waigani Convention with the objective of banning the importation of hazardous and radioactive wastes and managing hazardous waste within the region as a whole. In the Caribbean region, Governments of small island developing States are implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention), through the development of a Protocol to Control Land-based Pollution of the Wider Caribbean Region.

- **Coastal and marine resources**. The Forum Fisheries Agency of the South Pacific region has provided technical support to small island developing States for negotiation of the South Pacific Tuna Treaty with the United States of America. The Indian Ocean Commission and SPREP have developed guidelines for monitoring coral reefs in their respective regions. In the South Pacific, 13 small island developing States have embarked on the development and implementation of the Strategic Action Programme aimed at managing the coastal and ocean resources in the South Pacific in a sustainable manner. In the Indian Ocean, a Regional

Oil Spill Contingency Planning Project is proposed to protect the marine ecosystems of the western Indian Ocean.

- **Tourism resources**. In the Caribbean region, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) created a Technical Committee on Sustainable Tourism in 1998. A strategy and plan of action for the development of sustainable tourism in the Caribbean has been adopted. Efforts have been made to ensure compliance with the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention).

- **National institutions and administrative capacity**. The Caribbean Center for Development Administration, as implementing agency of a UNDP/Caribbean Development Bank pilot project, Strengthening Capacity for Sustainable Development in the English-speaking Caribbean, has established sustainable development councils in six countries in the region as a major initiative on the strengthening of institutions and capacity-building.

- **Regional institutions and technical cooperation**. Small island developing States in the Pacific region have developed a well organized structure of eight regional intergovernmental organizations, each with a particular focus funded by member contributions. In order to avoid duplication and harmonize their activities, these eight organizations have established the South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC), a key function of which is to coordinate regional programmes. In the Caribbean, ECLAC/CDCC, in collaboration with CARICOM, has served as the regional coordination mechanism *ad interim* for the implementation of the Programme of Action. In the African region, the Indian Ocean Commission has also been actively engaged in the implementation process.

- **Transport and communication**. The Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association (PITA) was formed in 1997 and established close working relationships with the International Telecommunication Union. Other regional private sector initiatives include The South Pacific Ports Association (SPPA) and the Association of South Pacific Airlines (ASPA).

C. International level

- **Climate change and sea level rise**. Under the coordination of regional organizations, small island developing States have actively participated in several international monitoring programmes, such as the Global Ocean Observation System (GOOS), the Global Climate Observation System (GCOS) and the Global Sea-level Observation System (GLOSS). As of 7 October 1998, 35 small island developing States had ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As of 11 December 1998, 14 had signed or ratified the Kyoto Protocol. As of 10 December 1998, 30 small island developing States had ratified the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, 30 had ratified the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, 21 had ratified the London Amendment to the Montreal Protocol and 10 had ratified the Copenhagen Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

- **Management of wastes**. As of 17 June 1998, 17 small island developing States had ratified the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. As of 30 October 1998, 18 small island developing States had ratified the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78). In addition, small island developing States in all regions have begun the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities through national and regional projects.

- **Coastal and marine resources**. As of 3 November 1998, 37 small island developing States had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. As of 5 January 1999, 11 small island developing States had ratified or acceded to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks; another 5 had signed the Agreement.
- **Land resources**. As of 9 December 1998, 27 small island developing States had ratified or acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.
- **Biodiversity resources**. As of 28 May 1998, 38 small island developing States, that is, all small island developing States on the United Nations list with the sovereign capacity to enter into international legal instruments, had ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. As of 6 November 1998, 19 small island developing States had ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- **Human resource development**. A number of small island developing States in the Pacific (Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu) have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Annex II

Priorities for future action identified by small island developing States at the regional level

Caribbean	*Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean*[a]	*Pacific*[b]
	Sectoral priorities	
1. Coastal and marine resources	1. Tourism resources	• Improving management of inshore and offshore marine resources
2. Natural and environmental disasters	2. Biodiversity resources	• Minimizing land- and sea-based pollution
3. Land resources	3. Climate change and sea level rise	• Promoting sustainable tourism
4. Management of waste	4. Coastal and marine resources	• Freshwater resources: provision of adequate supplies of non-polluted freshwater
5. Climate change	5. Freshwater resources	
6. Freshwater resources	6. Management of waste	• Conservation of terrestrial and marine biological resources
7. Tourism resources	7. Natural and environmental disasters	• Developing environmentally and economically sustainable energy resources
8. Biodiversity	8. Land resources: development of sustainable and diversified agricultural production	
9. Energy resources	9. Energy resources	
	Cross-sectoral priorities	
1. Implementation, monitoring and review • Financial resources • Legislation • Information management • Involvement of marginal group	1. Human resource development • Health • Education • Training • Gender mainstreaming • Poverty eradication	• Improving United Nations coordination • Building new partnerships and promoting participation • Implementing multilateral agreements
2. National institutions and administrative capacity • Capacity-building • Policy formulation • Training	2. Globalization, development finance, trade and investment	• Building capacity through education, training and awareness-raising • Strengthening links between environment and integrated development
3. Human resource development • Poverty alleviation	3. Transport and communication	• Developing benchmarks and information for sustainable development
4. Science and technology • Technical resources	4. Science and technology	• Integrating health, population and development
5. Transport and communications	5. Regional cooperation and integration Regional institutions and technical cooperation	• Vulnerability index • Financial resources
6. Regional institutions and technical cooperation	6. Implementation, monitoring and review	

[a] At the Ministerial Meeting of African Small Island Developing States (Seychelles, 7–10 July 1998), priorities were identified and ranked, but not by sectoral and cross-sectoral categories. At the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Atlantic Small Island Developing States Ministerial Meeting (Valetta, Malta, 24–27 November 1998), the priorities identified at the African small island developing States meeting were reaffirmed. In the table they have been grouped under sectoral and cross-sectoral categories. The Malta meeting also identified the following common immediate priorities: oceans/seas; tourism; waste management; freshwater resources; biodiversity; trade; financing; limitations to human resources and capacity; institutional weaknesses; infrastructural development; integrated management approaches; vulnerability index; and improving United Nations coordination.

[b] At the Roundtable of Pacific Ministers on Sustainable Development (Auckland, New Zealand, 17 December 1998), Pacific small island developing States outlined their priorities for future action but did not rank them. They are presented here as such.